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FOR THE PRESERVATION OF AMERICA'S HERITAGE ABROAD

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THE LITTLE CAMP AT BUCHENWALD MEMORIAL  
"CORRECTS AN INJUSTICE," SAYS ELIE WIESEL

President Bush Praises U.S. Preservation Commission Chair Warren L.  
Miller Who Battled Seven Years to Build a Memorial For the Victims at  
Buchenwald's Forgotten Little Camp

An April 14<sup>th</sup> dedication ceremony at the Buchenwald Memorial will recognize one of the many forgotten horrors that continue to emerge in the history of the Holocaust. The Little Camp Memorial will recognize a part of Buchenwald notorious for its extreme brutality and conditions far more deplorable than the main camp, as well as for its famous former inmates.

Over the last seven years, Warren L. Miller, now Chairman of the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad, has painstakingly resurrected the memory of the Little Camp by creating a fitting memorial at the site. Miller conceived of the idea for a memorial during a 1994 visit to the main camp, when he found the site of its notorious Little Camp obliterated and unmarked beneath over-grown bush.

Miller's efforts were recognized in a ceremony at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum on March 13<sup>th</sup>. His address recalled the conditions at the Little Camp that led to his idea to construct a memorial of remembrance. "Evil was with us then and evil is with us now," Miller said in contrasting the horrors of the Little Camp and the November 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attack on the U.S.

Other speakers at the event included the new Chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Fred Zeidman, White House Deputy of Chief of Staff Josh Bolton, Rabbi Herschel Schaeter, the first Jewish chaplain of the Third Army that arrived at Buchenwald after liberation, and remarks were made on behalf of Dr. Volkhard Knigge, Director of the Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora Foundation. Among the 400 attendees at the event were survivors, liberators, ambassadors from 21 nations, and members of Congress.

"On behalf of the President, I want to commend the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad, and especially its Chairman Warren L.

Miller, for your vision and hard work in putting together the extraordinary memorial to the Little Camp at Buchenwald,” Bolton said.

Elie Wiesel was among the people, mainly Jewish and including large numbers of children, who were placed in the Little Camp upon reaching Buchenwald. Wiesel, a Nobel Prize winner described his experiences in his autobiographical book “Night,” wrote movingly of his memories of the Little Camp in a letter read at the ceremony, calling the dedication of the memorial “an important and meaningful event: it corrects an injustice.”

“The Museum is grateful to the United States Commission for the Preservation of America’s Heritage Abroad for its invaluable work and commitment,” Chairman Zeidman said in thanking Miller. “He has passionately and selflessly devoted countless hours to the cause of the Holocaust remembrance. In creating the Little Camp memorial at Buchenwald over the past seven years, he accomplished what no one thought could or would be done.”

Dr. Knigge’s remarks also expressed gratitude for Miller’s work. “Tirelessly and ceaselessly, sensitively and stubbornly, with great commitment to the victims, and for the sake of a more humane future, Warren L. Miller worked for the memorial - bridging gaps, developing ideas, bringing people together and initiating friendships in the process.”

In conceiving the Little Camp memorial, Miller raised the funds from private donors, including Little Camp survivors and their descendants. He successfully overcame the challenges presented by the German approval process to ensure that the memory of what the Little Camp inmates endured will not be forgotten. Some of the world’s best-known Holocaust survivors; including Wiesel and a seven-year-old Meyer Lau, now Israel’s Chief Rabbi, were incarcerated there.

The particularly brutal and barbaric conditions at the Little Camp first came to light with the liberation of Buchenwald led by General Patton’s troops on April 11, 1945. They found thousands of inmates, including more than 900 children and teenagers living in conditions beyond description. Soldiers who entered the Little Camp that day would never again be the same. As many as 2000 inmates were housed in each windowless stable that had been originally built for 50 horses. Conditions were so horrific that many American soldiers and main camp prisoners could not bring themselves to go into the Little Camp at the time of liberation.

The Little Camp became a “camp within a camp” in 1942, housing the quarantined slave laborers within a barbed-wire enclosure adjacent to the main camp. By January 1945, it was reserved primarily for Jews who arrived in open cattle cars and after surviving death marches. Murderous conditions prevailed: corpses lay out in the open, inmates at times received no food or drinking water, and with a single latrine for nearly 20,000 inmates, many were forced to use their food bowls as night latrines. Thick mud was everywhere.



Rampant epidemics of diseases, including dysentery, went untreated. Many inmates had perished by the time of liberation.

In the 1950's, the East German Government turned Buchenwald into a massive shrine to anti-fascism and held youth rallies there. The legacy of Jewish suffering was ignored and the Little Camp was left to deteriorate. Today Buchenwald is one of the most visited concentration camps with 600,000-800,000 visitors per year. Nevertheless, at the time of Miller's visit in 1994, there was no remnant of the Little Camp, even though it was known within Buchenwald as the place where the greatest suffering occurred. In his 1995 speech at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Buchenwald, Miller announced the commission's intent to build a memorial.

Miller found an especially appropriate architect in Stephen B. Jacobs, a Buchenwald survivor liberated at age 5, who donated his services. All plans for the memorial had to pass the scrutiny of the Board of Directors of the Buchenwald Foundation as well as a curatorial council comprised of 15 German historians. Miller with the help of Jacobs and Dr. Volkhard Knigge, the Director of the Buchenwald Foundation, initially had to overcome the obstacle of a moratorium on any further monuments at the Buchenwald site. He then faced a proposal to have an architectural competition for the design of the memorial after Mr. Jacobs' design was nearly completed. The design also conflicted with a 31-inch height restriction placed on memorials at the site. Another complication occurred in 1999, when the adjoining 1000-year-old city of Weimar was designated as the cultural capital of Europe, attracting over a million visitors to Buchenwald and precluding any construction that year.

By early 2000, the various barriers had taken their toll and the prospects for the memorial began to look dim. However, Miller persevered, raising substantial additional funds and persuading the Buchenwald Foundation to assist the funding. Construction began in the spring of 2001.

The memorial is designed to focus and educate visitors to the pernicious history of the Little Camp. It is built of stone from a site near the quarry where the Little Camp inmates were forced to break and carry stones. The floor is cobblestone recalling the streets from Eastern and Central Europe from where many of the inmates came. The entrance ramp ends with a 90-degree turn into a closed, stark space forcing the visitor to experience a moment of arrival and a sense of confinement. A gnarled, broken tree symbolizing the continuity of life after suffering grows in a triangular space, recalling the triangular badge every prisoner wore. Around the interior perimeter floor are the names of the cities, ghettos, and camps from which the inmates were transported. The powerful inscription on the memorial walls that was written by Miller appears in six languages and depicts the horrors experienced in the camp.

The U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad was created by Congress to recognize that, as a nation of immigrants, the United States has an interest in preserving sites in foreign countries associated with the cultural heritage of its citizens. A focus is placed on groups that were victims of discrimination and genocide during

World War II, especially in Eastern and Central Europe. The Commission negotiates diplomatic agreements with foreign governments to preserve and protect sites, and facilitates preservation efforts with private contributions. The Commission's work helps emerging democracies face up to their past and recognize the value of the sites that are of importance to religious and ethnic minorities.